



CMC: STRIKE FIGHTER ENTERS PRODUCTION



In a statement issued by the Commandant of the Marine Corps on the Joint Strike Fighter short take off and landing (STOVL) variant, Gen. James F. Amos explained why he is optimistic about the aircraft and his commitment to its progress over the next two years. "I will track every pound of weight growth, required engineering fixes, and every test point completed...Of note, the Marine Corps' first operational STOVL aircraft are in production now and they will be delivered this year; that is good news." The statement also

included Gen. Amos' expectation of the multitude of stakeholders directly involved in the development and production of the F-35B to meet and exceed requirements.

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Watch the CMC discuss the relevance of the Corps as [America's Expeditionary Force In Readiness](#)

NEWS

LT. GEN. PAXTON ASSUMES COMMAND OF II MEF



Marines and Sailors of II Marine Expeditionary Force (MEF) welcomed Lt. Gen. John M. Paxton Jr., a native of Chester, Pa., as he assumed command during a ceremony at Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, N.C., Jan. 18. Paxton completed his assignment as the Director for Operations for the Joint Staff in the Pentagon prior to assuming command of II MEF. As the new commanding general, he is now responsible for the training, equipping, and employment of a combined arms force consisting of nearly 60,000 Marines and Sailors. This force of ground, air and logistic combat elements is the largest and most powerful type of Marine Air-Ground Task Force in the Marine Corps and is one of only three in existence.

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INCREASED SECURITY BRINGS STABILIZATION



On Jan. 15, 2nd Battalion, 9th Marine Regiment launched Operation Integrity in Helmand Province, Afghanistan. The main purpose of the operation was to successfully cordon off a suspected hotspot for Taliban activity, search for weapon and IED caches, disrupt enemy logistical operations and gather census data on locals in the region of Sistani. Helicopters flew in and inserted Marines and ANA soldiers in the surrounding farmland. With security set and

unmanned aircraft monitoring from above, the Marines and ANA swept across the countryside, knocking on doors and searching compounds. But there were no insurgents or weapons to be found and after talking to locals, Capt. Ronald Diefenbach, commanding officer of Weapons Company, 2/9, noticed a trend. Unlike previous ops he had been on, the majority of the locals had no problem informing on the Taliban this time. The Marines have found that the locals are more willing to cooperate after seeing the effectiveness of coalition

operations, such as a recent one in northern Marjah that brought numerous Taliban fighters and commanders into custody. He said the positive feedback from the locals this time was probably due to increased security and stabilization of the region.

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MARINES DRIVE INSURGENTS SOUTH



On Jan. 14, the Marines of Echo Company, 2nd Battalion, 1st Marine Regiment commenced Operation Godfather, a three-day clearing operation in Durzay, located at the southern tip of Helmand Province. The purpose of Operation Godfather was to push the Taliban out of the remaining enclave, limiting their freedom of movement and removing them from the population center. Within the first hour on the ground, the platoon alone found four IEDs and an opium cache. Since early 2009, Marines from

Regimental Combat Teams seven and one have steadily pushed the Taliban south, driving them out of small villages and bazaars they had been using to stage attacks and consolidate supplies for their campaign of fear and intimidation. The operation in Durzay, considered the last real village in Central Helmand Province before the Pakistan border, leaves the Taliban with few places to go in South-Central Helmand. With spring a few months away, coalition forces hope to consolidate their gains.

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[Click here to view a map of the districts of Helmand Province >>](#)

USS GUNSTON HALL DEPARTS AMPHIBIOUS-SOUTHERN PARTNERSHIP STATION



Dock Landing Ship USS Gunston Hall (LSD 44), along with an embarked U.S. Marine Corps Security Cooperation Task Force (SCTF) and a U.S. Navy staff element from Destroyer Squadron Four Zero departed Naval Station Mayport in Mayport, Fla. on Jan. 16 for a two-month deployment to the U.S. Southern Command (USSOUTHCOM) area of responsibility (AOR) in



support of Amphibious-Southern Partnership Station (A-SPS) 2011. Southern Partnership Station is an annual deployment of various

specialty platforms to the USSOUTHCOM AOR in the Caribbean and Latin America. The mission's primary goal is information sharing with navies, coast guards, and civilian services throughout the region.

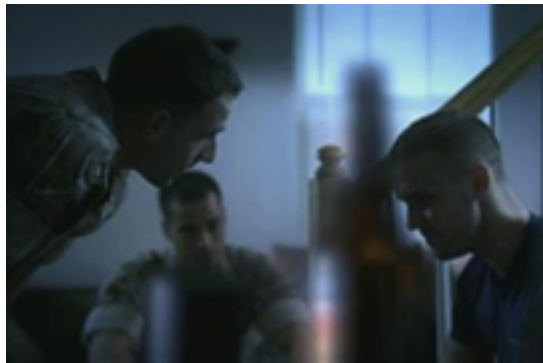
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SAVING MONEY, MAINTAINING SAFETY

Marine Medium Helicopter Squadron 262 (Reinforced), Marine Aircraft Group 36, 1st Marine Aircraft Wing, III Marine Expeditionary Force, recently marked 60,500 flight hours without sustaining any Class A mishaps. Class A mishaps are any damages that equals \$2 million or more or any fatality. The squadron meticulously follows the rules, regulations and orders governing the maintenance and flying of the squadron's helicopters, explained Maj. David Hurst, HMM-262's executive officer. All of these have "been written and rewritten over the past 60 years ... we've gotten to the point where we're really good at flying safely," he said.

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SUICIDE PREVENTION TRAINING EXPANDED



As part of their annual training requirements, junior enlisted Marines and Sailors will now receive new suicide prevention training. According to Headquarters Marine Corps, until 2009 the rate of suicide among civilians was higher than the Corps'. The suicide prevention program truly took off the same year when a noticeable spike in suicides showed itself in the statistics. The number of suicides dropped from 52 in 2009 to 37 in 2010. However, the number of suicide attempts has risen

steadily since 2006, with 2010 seeing more than 160 attempts.

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[Click here for more information on suicide prevention >>](#)

SALUTING HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS VOLUNTEERING FOR MILITARY SERVICE



Every year across the nation, while high school seniors are recognized and honored at awards and graduation ceremonies by their communities and fellow students, the thousands of young men and women who choose to enlist in the armed forces are largely ignored. Kenneth Hartman, academic director of Drexel University Online and a United States Army veteran, wants that to change.

Together with community members, guidance counselors and veterans, Hartman founded the

Cherry Hill, N.J.-based organization "Our Community Salutes" to ensure that our nation's future service members are duly honored. He shares the story of one Marine honoree who found that the recognition gave him motivation while facing the rigors of his Marine Corps recruit training.

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HEROES OF THE WEEK

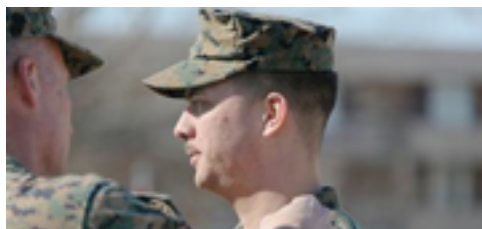
MARINE'S LEGACY ONE OF HELPING OTHERS

Sgt. Wesley Rice lived to serve his fellow man, God and country, his mother told the San Antonio Express News last week. It seems tragically fitting to her that he died saving fellow Marines when their amphibious assault vehicle sank during training in California. The surviving five Marines told Rice's relatives that their instructor pushed them out of the vehicle as it became submerged Friday morning but wasn't able to save himself. Officials investigating the accident are looking into what caused the vehicle to become submerged. Sgt Rice, 27, was an Iraq War veteran and San Antonio native.



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BRONZE STAR, MERITORIOUS PROMOTION



On Jan 14, Brig. Gen. Christopher Owens, II Marine Expeditionary Force deputy commanding general, awarded Cpl. Sean A. Warren the Bronze Star Medal with combat distinguishing device along with a meritorious promotion to Corporal for acts against the Taliban while deployed in Afghanistan in 2010. Cpl. Warren is a native



of Jacksonville, Fla., and squad leader with Weapons Company, Battalion Landing Team, 2nd Battalion, 2nd Marine Regiment, 22nd Marine Expeditionary Unit.

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EVENTS

66TH ANNIVERSARY OF FLAG RAISING



The [Marine Corps War Memorial Foundation](#) will commemorate the 66th anniversary of the flag raising atop Mt. Suribachi during the Battle of Iwo Jima at the [Marine Corps War Memorial](#) in Arlington, Va., Feb. 23. The ceremony will start at 0930 and will include band performances, color guard and firing detail.

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TAKE A TRIP TO CAMELOT THIS SUNDAY



The Marine Chamber Orchestra will honor the 50th anniversary of the Kennedy Administration with the tribute concert "Camelot" at 2 p.m., Sunday, Jan. 23 at Northern Virginia Community College's [Rachel M. Schlesinger Concert Hall and Arts Center](#) in Alexandria. Conducted by Director Col. Michael J. Colburn, the performance will also include selections by the Marine Jazz Combo featuring guest artist Paul Winter. Musicologist Elise Kirk, author of Music at the White House, will narrate the program. The concert is free and no tickets are required.

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